



Illustrated by "Flight" photographs

INAUGURAL FLIGHT

To South Africa on the First Springbok Flying-boat Service

WITH a unique experience and belief in the operation of flying boats, B.O.A.C. has opened air services to South Africa with the new Short Solent, the civil version of the Seaford designed for the R.A.F. by Short Bros. and Harland. Reopening of the route is, perhaps, a venture, and certainly a necessity. South African Airways and the British Corporation work in conjunction over the route between the U.K. and Johannesburg, and it is part of the agreement that each company shall provide an equal number of services. After the war, Yorks and Lancastrians were used, but the South African airline abandoned interim-type aircraft last year and purchased, reluctantly, American Skymasters. Since that time, the B.O.A.C. contribution has been maintained with Yorks in competition with Constellations and Skymasters flown by other European

By ROY PEARL

operators. That type will be superseded gradually as the Solents come into service to take over the full commitment of three schedules a week. The popularity of the flying boat is already evident in London and Johannesburg, where bookings are full two months ahead. This flying-boat service can offer unusual comfort in the air, a rest each night in a comfortable bed, a flight of more than 6,000 miles in easy stages over a route of historic and geographic interest.

Appreciating the selling value attached to this service, and the keen competition from other European airlines, B.O.A.C. inaugurated the service by flying travel agency representatives and members of the British Press to see for themselves, and on behalf of their clients, the advantages of the route. There are many aspects of the Springbok service which must be dealt with in the next issue, since the inaugural flight afforded the opportunity of assessing the route, the aircraft, and the reaction of prospective travellers and authorities at the ports of call and destination.

Our flight was in the hands of Capt. E. Rotheram, who started flying in 1933 and has commanded aircraft in Imperial Airways and B.O.A.C. over most landplane and flying-boat routes. He was awarded the King's Commendation for valuable services in the air last year, and is one of B.O.A.C.'s mileage millionaires. Capt. J. M. Peers, normally a Solent captain, who acted as second pilot on the flight, was in the R.A.F. during the war, and since his transfer to airline duties has flown almost without a break on the route from Durban through Cairo to Karachi. The aircraft was the *Southampton*, and carried the ship's clock presented to the Line by the Mayor of Southampton when the passenger terminal was opened.

We were impressed with the functioning of the terminal

(Above) Representatives of aviation circles in Northern and Southern Rhodesia boarding the launch on the Zambesi. (Below) Flying past the lighthouse and the windsock after taking off from Augusta harbour.

